

SAF/LLZ (Legislative Research Team)

REYES, Silvestre (Democrat)
Representative, 16th District, Texas
Elected 1996 to the 105th Congress
Reelected to succeeding Congresses



BACKGROUND

Born: Canutillo, Texas - 10 November 1944
Home: El Paso, Texas
Marital status: Married (Carolina) - 3 children
Religion: Roman Catholic
Education: El Paso Community College, AA
Military: US Army, helicopter crew chief in Vietnam, 1966-68
Profession: Border Patrol agent

Political: Canutillo School Board, 1968-70. Defeated Rick Ledesma (R) with 71% of the vote for the open seat of Rep Ronald Coleman (D) who retired. Reelected in 2000 with 68% of the vote and in 2002 ran unopposed.

Rep Reyes served 27 years with the US Border Patrol becoming the first Hispanic border patrol chief in 1984. Priorities include protecting the defense interests at Ft Bliss and White Sands Missile Range and protecting veterans' benefits. Ft Bliss includes the Army's Air Defense Center, home of the Patriot missile system. Beaumont Army Medical Center also in the district. In the 105th Congress, commented that the privatization rush actually costs more money. Was concerned about renewal of the MacGregor Range used by Ft Bliss and Holloman AFB. Said he fully supported the range but was concerned about losing it due to pressure from environmentalists and negative media stories. Questioned whether DoD funding levels were insufficient for all the missions the military was being asked to perform. (CR, 19May98)

In the 106th Congress, said Congress needed to show support for missile defense and move forward as quickly as possible on the program. (CR, 20May99) In 1999 expressed concern with language in the FY00 DoD auth which prohibited use of funds for combat or peacekeeping operations in Yugoslavia. Commented that as a veteran himself and someone who represents 50,000 veterans in his district, he could tell colleagues that delays and errors in the veterans' benefits claims process are very frustrating. (CR, 29Jun99) Was concerned with use of Texas National Guard troops to search for drug traffickers along the Rio Grande. (AP, 23Jul99)

In the 107th Congress, was appointed to the Intelligence Cmte. Objected to plans to move management and funding responsibility for missile defense programs from BMDO to the individual services. Obtained \$13.6M in the FY02 DoD auth for senior NCO family quarters at Ft Bliss. Objected to the inclusion of language in the FY03 DoD auth that he said would jeopardize wilderness study areas beneath the air space of the Utah Test & Training Range (UTTR). Suggested that current levels of GI bill benefits were inadequate and hurt military recruiting efforts. Supported legislation to improve employment, training, and placement services for veterans.

Additional: Lost the hearing in his right ear in Vietnam. Enjoys golf. Member of Army Caucus, Impact Aid Coalition, National Security Caucus and the New Democrat Coalition.
AF Bases: None

COMMITTEES

ARMED SERVICES -- Subcs on: Strategic Forces (Ranking); Readiness
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SELECT INTELLIGENCE
BOARD OF VISITORS, US AIR FORCE ACADEMY --1998-2000